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**TO:** House Ways and Means Committee

**BILL:** House Bill (HB) 0531: Public Schools STEM and Robotics Program Task Force - Establishment

**DATE:** February 18, 2026

**POSITION:** Letter of Information

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The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) are providing information regarding House Bill 0531, *Public Schools STEM and Robotics Program Task Force – Establishment*, which requires the creation of a one-year task force to gather data on current STEM and robotics programs in Maryland public schools and other states. The task force would study the feasibility and practicality of implementing competitive, statewide STEM and robotics programs, including consideration of designating competitive robotics as a varsity sport in all public high schools. MSDE would provide staffing support to the task force, with a final report due by December 15, 2026.

The Department currently administers the Maryland Robotics Grant Program, which distributes approximately \$350,000 annually to expand access to robotics education across the State, and maintains multi-year subgrantee and programmatic data. This existing data may help shed light on some of the proposed topics of study by the task force. Existing funding supports 30 grantees, including 11 local education agencies (LEAs) and 4 non-profit organizations, and reaches over 30 high schools, 12 middle schools, and 45 elementary schools.

Clarification regarding the scope of research expectations and the use of existing data resources may support more efficient implementation. Although MSDE is expected to absorb the operational impact within existing resources, it is critical that the agency's responsibilities remain limited to coordination and the use of available data. As drafted, the scope of the task force is extremely broad, requiring the collection of individual program-level data in Maryland and other states on program administration, funding sources and amounts, and fiscal impacts on revenues and expenditures. Obtaining this level of detail, especially for programs in other states, may present significant practical challenges. If the task force's work requires original research, statewide surveys, or contracted analyses beyond currently available data, additional workload and potential fiscal considerations may arise.

MSDE recognizes that a coordinated statewide review of STEM and robotics programs may provide valuable insight into program access, best practices, and opportunities for growth. The Department stands ready to provide technical assistance and share existing data to support informed decision-making.

For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at 443-571-5461 or [Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov](mailto:Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov).